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THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

IV, No. 1 UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS: PHILADELPHIA January, 1942

lish and Elocution

as time for him to go home. he inebriated gentleman on way's Great White Way for a taxi. With great diffi- e gave his address. The taxi shook his head: "I don't get The gentleman swayed on the nd repeated the address in mumbling speech. Again the shook his head.

then a kindly by-stander harge of the situation. "He you to take him to 33 West Street." The directions were distinctly and emphatically. muddled gentleman lurched e cab, he waved toward his ctor and shouted out the w: "Shanks, you damn elocu- !"

years college English de- nts have viewed with con- or at least intolerance, the r of elocution, and perhaps because the term has con- much artificiality and affec- But now that the teaching ch has become dignified, se- purposeful, and effective in e, I feel that it would be lly advantageous if the col- nglish Department and the Speech Department estab- an *entente cordiale* to im- the teaching of college Eng-

ideal teacher of literature be a cross between the actor he scholar. Otherwise, how adequately interpret Shake- ? How many college teach- English can make a lyric r their students by the oral retation of it? Poetry should ayed" with the human voice instrument, just as a piece ic is played on the violin or

y teachers of college English attempt to *voice* the litera- n their classroom. They are t to talk *about* the literature. who attempt oral interpreta- re sadly deficient in the of expression. Hence their g lacks vitality. We should that our English students out to teach English qualify interpretation, and it would a bad idea if many of our ly gentlemen teaching col- nglish would go to the Doc- Speech for a check-up.

I look back on my college in the English classroom, I that the teachers who left epest impression upon me those who vitalized their g by expressive reading. of what they told me *about* re I cannot now recall, but never forgotten *the litera-* at they made live for me by al interpretation of it. May with a roll call?

chers at Brown: Bronson's thetic voice bringing out the of Charles Lamb; Manley

(*Continued on Page 3*)

Large Turn-Out at Annual Meeting Hears Papers on Crisis, Democracy, and English

Howard Lowry Elected CEA President for 1942

In spite of war and a deeper national crisis than was anticipated when plans were made, a total of 141 persons—from Nova Scotia, Texas, Wyoming, Florida, Alabama, and less remote regions—registered their attendance at the CEA annual meeting in Indianapolis on December 28 and 29, approximately twenty per cent of the membership.

And at least one hundred of these were present at the first session on Sunday afternoon, when George R. Reynolds, of the University of Colorado, spoke on "Democratic Ideas as Presented in the Great Writers of the Past."

Citing the results of various questionnaires as evidence that students possess vague and contradictory ideas of what democracy means, and that the literature of democracy, including the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution, is unknown to them, Dr. Reynolds declared that teachers have "assumed democracy" and neither have made its meaning clear nor have inspired an enthusiasm for it. Our opportunity now, he insisted, is to present this literature not as information, or dogma, or propaganda, but as literature; and by doing so we will build an effective democratic faith, for only ideas held with conviction are fruitful in action.

Without listing individual works that students might study, Dr. Reynolds defined the standards for selecting them, both European and American: "Almost any free and noble utterance offers such material. Any literature that emphasizes the worth and dignity of man, any that stirs social conscience, any that shows the likenesses that bind men together despite distinctions of race or creed or rank or riches, any moving cries for justice, are living voices of Democracy."

With the statement that books and ideas can be as powerful as bullets and battleships, he proposed that a collection of such literature be made available for nation-wide use, possibly sponsored by the CEA

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Have We Kept the Faith?

By Norman Foerster

The following is the address of President Foerster, read for him in his enforced absence by President-elect Lowry at the dinner meeting of the CEA held at Indianapolis, December 28, 1941. Because of the unusual significance of this fine paper, we break our rule concerning the length of contributions and print it entire.

Upon accepting the honor of the presidency of our Association, I was informed that my first duty was to offer, through our NEWS LETTER, some sort of message to the members. In that message I suggested, as our primary aim, that we should inquire "how our organization, founded in a time of inhumanities, might best set out to serve the humanities." To make this aim more specific I suggested that we adopt, as our theme for the 1941 meeting, the question to which part of the 1940 meeting had been devoted, the question "What Can Teachers of English Do to Help Preserve the Democratic Tradition in America?"

This question is now before us. There may be many good ways of answering it. I shall give my own answer, as briefly as I can. Whether it is a good answer is for you to decide.

The question, as stated, seems to imply that the national emergency has imposed a new obligation upon us, that a nation at war needs a kind of education different from that of a nation at peace. If this is the implication, I think it is false. As Aristotle remarked long ago, the best way to preserve a constitution is to adapt education to the form of government. He did not say that this is true during a time of war and not true during a time of peace. The democratic tradition is something that we should help preserve at all times. "In time of peace prepare for war." "In time of war prepare for peace." Education makes democracy strong in peace and makes it strong in war. It follows that if we teachers of English should now undertake to do something new and different, it is only because we should have done it long ago.

What should we have done long ago? Our teaching should have been dominated by that belief in man, in the dignity of individual man, which is the very essence of the democratic tradition. In that affirmation, democracy is strong in peace or war; without it, democracy is weak in peace or war. To make that affirmation with both light and leading is a task forever imposed upon us teachers of English by the very nature of our subject. As Mr. I. A. Richards said in the fine close of his paper which we recently published as a Chap Book, "We teachers of English have a great responsibility. We are the guardians of the main

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Why Not?

The following remarks, my fellow literature teachers, are based on the premise that you have a son Bill. If you do not, you will have to substitute in your mind your neighbor's son Bill. Either will do, just so Bill is a young person in whom you are interested, but who is not and never will be in your literature class.

Son Bill is home from college for the summer vacation. He says to you, "I believe I'll do some reading this summer. You're the literature expert. Give me some suggestions."

You are pleased, no doubt. You want this son, who will be perhaps a chemical engineer, perhaps a business man, perhaps a farmer, to be also a reader. So before you make your suggestions you ask yourself two questions: Which books have I liked? Which of these books can Bill now read so profitably and so enjoyably that he will want to continue reading.

A good, practical approach. Why use a less practical approach as a teacher?

As Bill reads, you talk with him about the books one by one. In fact you have a good time talking with him. You mention aspects which you liked or which made you think, and he does the same. You even argue, and he shocks you by some of his common-sense judgments against your more professional ones. But you see his common-sense point of view, and perhaps even feel refreshed and restored mentally by it.

You are, of course, curious to learn how carefully and how intelligently your boy reads. You certainly know after the conversations—and without asking many questions. You modify your suggestions for further reading according to his reactions. Moreover, Bill doubtless reads with increasing awareness after each conversation, because you have mentioned points which had escaped him—and if in his estimation your points have sense, he tries not to let so much escape him another time. Soon he participates in book discussions with growing assurance and enjoyment.

Why for your students must exegesis and quiz be the accompaniment and the aftermath of reading, instead of this give and take conversation, so amply revealing to you and patently profitable to Bill?

You suggest to Bill that he keep a record of his reading. He may like to jot down in a reading journal points which will later help him to recall each book and its author, and he may be very glad later to have preserved in this journal certain passages which he particularly likes. Perhaps he will read something from this journal to you, or use it to remind him of points he wants to mention when

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Published 8 Times a Year by the
UNIVERSITY OF
PENNSYLVANIA PRESS
for the

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At the Year's End

The third annual meeting of CEA was acclaimed a success by all and sundry, as the saying is. Aside from necessary business which must be transacted at such a meeting, we question whether much benefit accrues to members not in attendance. So there is satisfaction in the thought that about one fifth of our total membership was on hand and that a large percentage of these actually took part in discussion.

The constitution of our society provides in unusual degree for democratic control. Members are reminded that any local group, organized as a regional section, may initiate legislation, or propose action by the national body, to be sent out in ballot form after it has been presented pro and con in the columns of THE NEWS LETTER. Questions also may be presented at the annual meeting and referred to the whole membership in this way. Several questions were so referred a year ago, and acted upon; but as it happened, there was no such deferred action this year.

Here Is Our Plan

Colleges all over the country are reorganizing their programs to meet the war-time emergency. Merely for purposes of argument, therefore, let us propose our own radical Plan. Years ago the University of Cincinnati invented the notion of alternating study and practice, and Antioch College borrowed the idea, becoming famous as a result. Students spend six weeks in college and then six weeks in some business or industrial plant, and continue this rotation for five years, when they receive a baccalaureate degree. The money they earn in the "shop" is applied to their tuition costs.

Our Plan is an expansion of this idea. Why not have thirty weeks in the classroom followed by sixteen weeks of money-earning employment in defense industry, and let these alternating periods continue for four years, when the degree will be awarded? Six weeks of vacation could be scattered through the year.

By such a plan, class work might begin in late September and continue until June, with a couple of breathing spells in winter and spring. Then the "shop" would begin in June and last through the summer, with any earnings applied to the costs of an education. We might even borrow the Antioch idea of having a Dean of Industry, whose job it would be to find the outside employment. But we should probably call him an Employment Bureau. This seems to us a pretty good plan, but maybe we are just victims of war-time hysteria.

Cause for Satisfaction

Although they agreed that English teachers should emphasize values and the democratic tradition, many who attended the Indianapolis meeting were conscious, no doubt, of a prevailing uncertainty about the best means of gaining those ends. In the discussions that followed the presentation of papers, practical suggestions were met by equally practical objections.

But this does not mean that the airing of such opinions is futile. Let us suppose that the meetings argued only about the value of teaching more of Chaucer than the Prologue, which of Shakespeare's plays is the best to begin with, or how students should be seated in the classroom.

It is good to argue the larger aims, even if we do not emerge confident that the one formula for the teaching of English has been discovered. It is evident that the CEA is aware of the problems that confront us.

An Encouraging Sign

The report of the Fall meeting of the Middle Atlantic Section, which appears elsewhere in this issue, was accompanied by a long outline of a proposal, adopted at the meeting, for articulating high school and college English through the recognition of common goals. The proposal is reassuring, for it recognizes that acceptable grammar, diction, sentence structure, and punctuation are goals worth achieving.

The school that believes that whatever is spoke or written is alright has been so talkative in recent years that one began to wonder whether teachers generally had forgotten that clarity and effectiveness and the inspiring of a decent respect for the writer or speaker mean something in composition.

It is not a matter of correctness but of acceptability and effectiveness. Philology is a science, and in a science right and wrong have no meaning. But composition is both an art and a craft; its tools must be sharp and the hand dextrous. Clumsy expression can be understood; whether it can be readily understood and whether the truth and value of what is being expressed will be accepted is another matter.

Teachers' Foibles

School teachers often seem fearfully and wonderfully made. Perhaps if we laugh at ourselves now and then, we shall be less concerned about the gibes of others.

On February 15th, 1941, your Secretary sent out to the general membership a series of proposals upon which all were asked to vote by mail, in accordance with the provisions of our constitution. Ballots began coming back to the Secretary's office within a few days, and perhaps fifty per cent of the total number voting had returned their ballots within two or three weeks.

But throughout the following six months ballots continued to be received, voting on questions from the admission of teachers in junior colleges to the most desirable date for our annual meeting. Eight months ago the final results of the balloting were announced, and as a result some of the provisions became law. Nevertheless, ballots continued to straggle in, and two came in December, one of them voting on whether we should hold our annual meeting this year on Sunday or Monday.

There is something about the routine business of the classroom which influences the behavior of teachers as well as of students.

From the Mail-Bag

Dear Editor:

Do you realize that we still have in our midst a man who once played the mocking-bird among our contemporary poets? And he played surpassing well "a part for most unplayable." He seems like a mocking-bird I once heard in Kentucky.

It was early summer, and the gallant mimicker among the leaves was full and running over. He gave his uttermost. And when he came to the blackbird's song, I thought that he outdid the blackbirds, with some added magic of his own.

Even so with our mocking-bird among the poets. Any enjoyer of verse (verse-enjoyer) who has read *John Brown's Body* more than twice will possibly recall how Stephen Benét ran the whole gamut of contemporary voices in his strangely living book. Granted, indeed, that he used his own voice, too, at times, as in the account of Pickett's charge—which even J. R. Lowell could hardly have attained, for eloquence and height. And the sketches also, of Stonewall Jackson, Lincoln, Benjamin, Lee, and McClellan, *inter alia*, are often, when they come to life, Benét's and Benét's alone.

But consider the echoings. Masters, Lindsay, Whitman, Sandburg, Dickinson, Robinson, and Amy Lowell are most easily recognizable. Not that the mimicking is satirical. The poet just seems to be trying to gather up as much America as he can, and to fling it forth even as his brother among the leaves flung forth the spirit of bird-dom. And as the Kentucky mocking-bird excelled the original in one instance, so, I think, does Benét.

He actually out-Arlingtons E. A. Robinson at one point. Seldom has anything been given to an age which is more fascinating and just, more homely and sublime, than the portrayal of John Vilas. Glance again at pages 333-341 in *John Brown's Body*. Perhaps Vilas typifies the spirit of the frontier adventurer. Or perhaps he stands partly for the Greenwich Villager of the twenties.

Be that as it may, we have here a phenomenon of fusion which may be unique in all literature. It seems that consciously or unconsciously Mr. Benét has climbed onto the shoulders of Edwin Arlington Robinson, and they have magically become one, though vaster. We have Robinson's world-beaten man, with an indestructible nucleus at his center, combined with Benét's romantic buoyancy, which was denied the incomparable Robinson. Hear John Vilas, coming back from the wilderness to New England:

> Broken of every knowledge but the last,
> Knowledge of how escape is not a door
> But a slow winding road whose hundred coils
> Return upon each other, soon or late
> —And how and when and under what cold stars
> The old wound bleeds beneath the armored mind.
> And yet, this journey is not desolate. . . .

Deckard Ritter
Ohio Wesleyan

Sonnet

on looking into a book on semantics

("Some educated and extremely intelligent people are so attached to the verbal 'maps' they have created that, when they find no territories in the known world to correspond to them, they create extra realms of 'transcendental reality' so that they will not have to admit the uselessness of their maps.")

That great broom, Science, sweeps us along,
And we, obedient dirt, would have it so:
Our dear lord Broom, thou who canst do no wrong,
Push where thou wilt, and thither will we go:
This floor's our home, nothing we are but dust;
Thee, Broom, we laud and praise thy bristles fair,
Thy handle, the blind janitor that must
Sweep furiously on he knows not where.
Spirit of Plato, to our twilight come;
Show us the trueness that is more than true;
There at the casement of the dust-filled room
The grimed, half-vision of our souls renew:
Christ's star; John's City; Keats' unmappéd seas
Sounding the imponderable verities.

A. E. Johnson
Syracuse University

Why Not?

(*Continued from Page 1*)

he talks with you about the books. He will not write formal papers, and you will not dream of endangering his summer's reading by suggesting such a procedure.

Why not a personal reading diary like Bill's rather than formal papers for your students?

You see I am assuming certain things in making these suggestions. I am assuming first of all that your usual literature student is a non-major—a person who wants literature for personal living rather than for professional reasons. If this is not true in your college, at least in the first two years, hasten to ask what is wrong with your literature courses: the cultural subject most adaptable to everyone ought to be most widely elected. To be sure, majors as well as non-majors profit from individually directed reading, but I do not now wish to argue that point.

Second, I am assuming that you can know and approach your students as individuals, somewhat as you know and approach your son Bill, and that you can find time to talk to them personally and in small conversation groups. You can. For conversations with the students result in your knowing the students. And the answer to the question "Can I find time to converse with my students?" is, surprisingly, yes. Yes—if conversation substitutes in part for classes and for paper reading; yes—if you arrange a systematic plan, and if you do not balk at a forty-hour week.

Third, I am assuming that you yourself enjoy reading a wide range of literature, and that you are reading *now*, so that your contact with literature is not in the reminiscent or mummy stage. Moreover, by reading I do not mean perusing Ulfilas' Gothic Bible.

Fourth, I am assuming that as between what the authors say and what the critics (including yourself) say, you are rather more interested in the authors' products.

Fifth, I am assuming that live, adaptable purposes are back of your teaching. You honestly want your students,—these future engineers and business men and farmers—to find in this year and the next fifty years the fun and the value of reading—*their own* fun and *their own* value, you know. You want them to find recreation and satisfaction; you want them to make the acquaintance of many kinds of people and to consider many points of view. You want them to see the connection between success and these points of view. You want them to feel that familiarity with divers times, places, and experiences which they can possess only by having imaginatively lived in them. You want your students to achieve ability and self-confidence in selecting books which give them these values, and you want them to be aware of the wide range of reading available to them in original English and in translation. You want them to know from their own experience that some old books can fascinate them and that some new books can call into play their best thought. You want them to form the habit of taking from a book what it has to offer them individually. You want them habitually to associate with books as a man with a genius for friendship associates with people: not in order to classify them by type and order or merit, but to seize on and enjoy whatever in them is worthy of regard.

Can you achieve such ends with a set course so well as with individual readings? I doubt it.

Finally, I am assuming that you will not be nervous at the thought of giving identical credit for differing reading programs; for, being wise, you have long known that even with assignments identical, even with examination answers identical, thoughts and values obtained in a literature course are never identical. The true equality is that each student shall be enabled to profit as fully as he individually can.

Now what I have proposed amounts to this: that in at least one literature course in every college, individually planned reading supersede class assignments; that conversations supersede at least part of the lectures and examinations; that personal reading journals supersede formal papers.

However, if you cannot now go the whole way with me, you can at least afford to try an experiment: Take from your survey class eight or ten students selected at random. Let them attend the lectures if you will, but withhold all class assignments; and to occupy those hours normally spent on assignments, treat the boys and girls simply as if they were sons Bill who had said to you, "I believe I'll do some reading this semester. You're the literature expert. What can you suggest for *me?*"

You will be enthusiastic about the results.

Zay Rusk Sullens,
Stephens College,
Columbia, Missouri.

This Has Worked for Us

Out here in Kansas we have discovered by tests that our freshmen are slightly below the national norm in the ability to read. In an effort to improve their habits of reading and to awaken their desire for a wider knowledge of the contemporary world, we have passed over the usual book of readings, which is hard to keep up to date, and have subscribed instead to large numbers of twenty current magazines for them.

We include *The Atlantic, Harpers, The Reader's Digest, The National Geographic, Time, The Country Gentleman,* a few copies of *The Saturday Evening Post, Asia, Current History, Nature,* and some others. Each student pays fifty cents a semester toward the subscriptions, and magazines are exchanged at each class. This gives each student ten or twelve different magazines a month. He reads 15,000 words a week, chiefly nonfiction.

Once a week, students and instructor match ideas from the readings and try to find some basic principles running beneath the maze of current events and discussions. The students enjoy the reading, and other departments comment favorably on the results.

Our theory is that the way to learn to read is to read. The student's having to give an oral or written report on what he reads forces him to remember it, and his having to find words for his ideas gives him practice in the thought processes that must precede the writing of a theme. The content of the articles supplies ideas—something often lacking in freshman themes.

Our theory implies that literature, history, and everything that we call education is eventually made out of experience itself. There should be no gap between literature and life any more than between education and life. To be sure, current magazines, like much of our current fiction, present life as a very complex, chaotic affair, but some attempt must be made to find order in it. This miserable, despicable Actual, said Carlyle, is all we have to start with in finding our Ideal. America is here or nowhere.

After this introduction to experience the student, we hope, will realize, when he goes on to advanced courses, that textbooks give only an organized arrangement of the best experiences of the race in certain specialized fields and that all learning starts from experience. Life is a unity, and its various forms of expression cannot be separated from each other.

One of the causes for the decay of democracy in Germany, according to Mr. Thomas Mann, is that philosophy was contemptuous of the practical world. If we believe in the Phi Beta Kappa motto, "Philosophy the Guide of Life," let us assume more responsibility for the consequences of thought in action. Philosophy need not become political, but life should be the guiding star of philosophy. If it is not, literature may cease to appeal to the whole man, forced as he is to live in the modern world with all its distracting activities.

J. Gordon Eaker
Kansas State Teachers College,
Pittsburg

English and Elocution

(*Continued from Page 1*)

reviving the quaint melody of Chaucer's *Prologue;* Hammond Lamont voicing the indignation of Stevenson in the *Defence of Father Damien.* Teachers at Harvard: "Copey" in the full lilt of Kipling's *Bell Buoy;* Bliss Perry bringing out the lyric ecstasies in Tennyson's *Maud;* Neilson's resonant voice rolling out the sonorous lines from Milton's *Areopagitica;* Kittredge, "every inch a king," erect and silver-grey, stalking across the platform: "O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there!"

Great teachers these men—most of them great scholars, and their effectiveness for me was due, in large measure, to expressive oral interpretation in the classroom.

L. G. Painter
Mississippi State College
for Women

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Have We Kept the Faith?

(*Continued from Page 1*)

channel through which has come down to us whatever is high-hearted, courageous, noble, and passionate in its hopes for man, whatever is faithful, whatever is honorable, whatever is serious and sincere, whatever is most aware of man's nature and his fate, whatever is most ready to uphold and defend it."

To this Miltonic charge we can only reply that, as a group, we have not kept the faith, that, instead of defending this main channel, we ourselves were swept down another and sinister channel, the channel of relativism, of skepticism, of disillusionment, of cynicism.

During the twenty years between the two wars, we failed in our responsibility to resist the dark forces of decadence which led to the present crisis in civilization. On our own lips, the lips of the defenders of the humanities, fell that blight of which Mr. Richards speaks, when we used such words as *liberty, justice, honor, nobility, duty*. For us as for others, these words had no vigor of life, no immediacy or urgency. In the routine of teaching we gave them no present reality but associated them with the dead past, explaining what they meant, historically, to Milton, or Wordsworth, or Emerson.

No doubt we left our students free to suspect that the words might still mean something important, but our students were not likely to do this in a time when debunking was everywhere in fashion, when it seemed to be agreed that "whatever is high-hearted, courageous, noble, and passionate" needs to be stripped of its pretensions and reduced to a naked absurdity. Granted, it was not easy in those years for either students or teachers to believe, as even a scientist like President Conant now believes, that there are such things as "eternal values," that they are as authoritative today as when they were first realized by man, that it is a function of the teacher of literature to make accessible to his students the commanding faith in liberty, justice, honor, nobility, duty symbolized by great imaginative literature.

To be sure, college teachers of English did not go in heavily for debunking, except in occasional devastating asides: they were seriously busy with something else, the teaching of literary history. Both in the introductory course in literature, where a peep-show anthology was used, and in the electives, where a large amount of second- and third-rate literature was assigned, the main job consisted in trying to convey to unhistorical and bored minds some sense of the continuity of literature and its registration of ever-changing time spirits.

The teachers, having been trained for this job in college and graduate school, set about their work with learning and devotion, and a surprising number of students discovered that Richardson wrote novels and that Browning, in writing about the Renaissance, was not necessarily a poet of the Renaissance. Quizzes and examinations called for historical facts: "Arrange in chronological order; Identify the following; Trace the development." A poem was a symptom of a writer's biography and milieu, "and it was nothing more."

When a poem was actually faced and examined, the result was usually a combination of insensitive paraphrase and historical exegesis, inviting the comment which the Swedish worker made after noting one fragment after another of his old friend strewn along the railroad track: "By yiminy, something must have happened to Herbert." It happened not only to Herbert, but to Chaucer, Shakespeare, and all the rest, down to the aimless "omnibus" volumes.

No, college teachers did not teach literature well. They were so busy with the historical backgrounds that they neglected the literary foreground, so busy with the historical approach that they kept on approaching and failed to reach the object. And while they were engrossed in historicism and antiquarianism, the war came, the clash of ideologies came, the threat to civilization itself came. Before long it was evident even to scientists like the president of Harvard University, as I have remarked, that civilization and the democratic tradition cannot be preserved by the sciences, natural and social, which tell us what is, but only by the humanities, which tell us what, humanly speaking, ought to be. The crisis of civilization today lies not in the realm of facts but in the realm of values, and the dignity of the individual, the essence of democracy, implies the freedom to choose values. It is the prime function of education to make values accessible; and thus Conant is drawn to the conclusion that general education should be based upon philosophy, the arts, and letters.

Of the soundness of this view we teachers of letters will be easily persuaded. But it will demand of us a new kind of teaching of letters. We are to place in the center, not the history of literature but literature; not the history of civilization but civilization; not the values that were accessible to other ages and periods, but the values, the eternal values, that should always be accessible. We are to subordinate instruction in reading historically, perhaps postponing the survey of English literature to a senior course for majors, and devote our central effort, instead, to instruction in reading thoughtfully, concentrating upon human values in their imaginative symbols.

And here our task, as it seems to me, is twofold. Since literature is an art using imaginative symbols, we are certainly to be concerned with æsthetic analysis and judgment. *Understanding poetry*, as Cleanth Brooks and R. P. Warren have made clear in their textbook of that name, understanding any imaginative literature, requires an ability to see in what form, by what means, an author's experience or vision of life is communicated or presented, to see how the words, the rhythms, the images, the ideas, the attitudes, and the like are interrelated and integrated in the artistic organism. For a literary work is not a mechanical contrivance but rather, as Plato and Aristotle recognized, a living creature, similar to a plant or animal. To know it in this way involves repeated and close reading, reading of a sort radically different from the reading of informational prose. In this process historical knowledge plays a rôle, but a rôle far smaller than our conventional type of scholar supposes. The best outside aid, indeed, is not history but the fine arts, such as painting or music. To be trained in the method of the arts is to secure access to beauty, one of the arch values of civilization.

But art satisfies more than the sense of beauty. The house of art, like the house of life, is more than a structure; it is a place where there is some quality of living, where human nature expresses variously its love of other values, the good and the true. As Edith Wharton said, the reader will insistently ask, "What am I being told this story for?", or, in student parlance, "So what?" It is not enough to answer, "You are being told this story for the sake of an æsthetic experience."

People who read books are not æsthetic analysts, nor should they be. They are human beings, and as such they have an indestructible notion that literature has something to do with human beings, human nature, human destiny, and that in respect to these it may sometimes be true and sound, sometimes false and unsound. They will never be satisfied to think only of the excellence of the imaginative symbol; they will want to consider, too, whether the thing symbolized is excellent and of good report. And here again they need help. According to Frank Norris, what the novelist says the People believe. But "the People have a right," Norris went on, "to the Truth as they have a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It is *not* right that they be exploited and deceived with false views of life."

Like novelists and critics, teachers have a grave responsibility, which cannot be discharged by training students in the method of art. Along with that task we have another and greater: to help the young develop standards of value by which they may freely decide whether an author's vision of life is sound; whether it is true, partly true, or sheer nonsense. From this concern for truth we have been estopped by our paralyzing relativity and skepticism.

While holding ourselves accountable for truth in the realm of historical fact, we blithely announced that we were Irresponsibles, to use MacLeish's word, in the realm of intellectual and spiritual values. We were afraid of really believing anything, or, if we had some sort of pitiful faith, we concealed it from our classes and put on a mask of sophisticated neutrality or indifference. The sense of futility that attended our teaching before the war started may be seen in the statement issued by a committee of twenty-four well-known members of the Modern Language Association on Values in Literature, in which historical and psychological considerations effectively smother the higher values of literature. This document revealed only too plainly our ethical unpreparedness for the critical period in which we are now living and teaching.

Under the pressure of events it is becoming clear to us that a man needs a firm center, as well as an expanding circumference. In democratic education we cannot crudely force a firm center into the student; he must form it for himself; he must exert his freedom to choose values. But he cannot choose what he does not know, and he will never know unless he is taught. Nor will it suffice to turn him over to the department of philosophy, or to the church, since the task in question is one shared by all the humanities, including literature. The power of great literature in forming a man's view of life needs no proof after all the testimony that has been offered through the ages. The business of the teacher of literature is to bring the student into vital contact with this power. By means of it, the old disparaged words in Mr. Richards' list—*liberty, justice, honor, nobility, duty*—take on new meaning, blend into a picture of the good life made memorable and efficient in imaginative symbols.

The values which finally sustain the democratic tradition had their source in Hellenism and Christianity. It was the Greeks who first recognized the dignity of man as man, as a creature noble in reason, infinite in faculty, closer akin to the gods than to the animal order. To the Greeks we owe our conception of democracy, of the free man in the free state, awake to the twin perils of license and tyranny. This conception was deepened and spiritualized by Christianity, which, through the example of Jesus, recognized the value of the single person, the dignity of each person however humble. Today, a new order, a new tyranny, is seeking to wipe out our democratic heritage, together with the exalted reasonableness of its classical basis and the spiritual democracy of its Christian basis.

What does this mean for us as teachers of English? First, it seems to me, that we should use every opportunity to support efforts, in our educational system, to restore a vital contact between students and the Classical and Christian traditions, and secondly, that we should emphasize, in our own teaching, the creative continuity of these basic traditions in English and American literature. In war and peace it is for us to share in the task of bringing home to the young generation the depth beneath depth which the democratic faith implies.

Fall Meeting of Middle Atlantic Section

Forty-two members from thirteen colleges and the Library of Congress attended the Fall meeting of the Middle Atlantic section, held at Georgetown University, November 29, 1941, too late to be reported in the December NEWS LETTER.

The group, presided over by the Rev. Hugh McCarron, Loyola College, Baltimore, who succeeded President Douglas Bement when the latter accepted a position at the University of Washington, gave most of its attention to the Section's new project, the examination of the purpose and place of literary study in the undergraduate curriculum.

To initiate discussion, the committee appointed to consider the new project made brief reports as follows: A Survey of Recent Articles in College English, Francis E. Litz, Catholic University, Chairman; The "Survey" Approach to Literature, George S. Wills, Western Maryland College; The "Masterpiece" Approach to Literature, Bernard M. Wagner, Georgetown University; The Three "R's" Are in Peril; The First Two Are Slipping, Harry R. Warfel, University of Maryland; What Are We Trying to Do When We Teach Literature in College?, Annette B. Hopkins, Goucher College.

After discussion of these reports, it was voted to devote the Spring meeting to considering the objectives of English departments in teaching students who are not majoring in English.

The group also agreed on an elaborate outline of a proposal for articulating high school and college English through the recognition of common goals. This statement, which declares that "the surest mark of trained intelligence is ability to report observation clearly, coherently, and forcefully and to read and listen alert for essential meaning," lists various reading goals and goals for oral and written expression. The former range from the habit of thinking about one reads to the proper use of library tools; the latter from the means of collecting material to the proper method of presenting it, including grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation.

With this statement of goals as a basis for discussion, it is hoped that members of the Section can go before various high school organizations, and that high school teachers will visit the colleges to discuss their common problems and ways of improving students' ability to write clearly and grammatically and to read intelligently.

A number of supplementary proposals in the outline set forth in greater detail how these objectives might be reached. One of them states that it is desirable for high school and college teachers to become better acquainted and suggests that the CEA be an agent for the exchange of student papers between the two groups of teachers.

Robert T. Fitzhugh, Secretary
University of Maryland

Indianapolis Meeting

(*Continued from Page 1*)

and issued by the Government, its purpose being not only to help win the War through national unity based on a national faith, but to win the peace, when totalitarianism may conquer unless the basic idea of the supreme value of the individual is so firmly established that no Fascist or Communist doctrines can shake it.

The vigorous discussion that followed, led by Homer S. Nugent, of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, condemned the inert open-mindedness found in recent years in the classroom, which resulted principally in students' befuddlement. One speaker reminded the audience that departments of political science have an even stronger duty to teach the methods of democracy than do English departments. It was also pointed out that our present democracy might be improved and that efforts to inspire a national faith should not serve only to preserve a *status quo*. The discussion resulted in the offering of a resolution, passed in the ensuing business meeting, that the president of the Association appoint a committee to investigate and promulgate a plan for publishing a collection such as Dr. Reynolds had proposed or at least a pamphlet for wide distribution among American students, probably through coöperation with the Government.

The informal business meeting that followed passed this resolution and received reports from the Treasurer, the Secretary, and the committee to nominate officers for the year 1942. The new officers are: President, Howard Lowry, Princeton University; Vice-Presidents, Edith Mirrielees, Stanford University; Theodore Morrison, Harvard University; Directors, Norman Foerster, University of Iowa; G. F. Reynolds, University of Colorado; A. P. Hudson, University of North Carolina; Milton Ellis, University of Maine.

The Treasurer's report showed that the Association is floating on an even if somewhat shallow keel, and the Secretary's report was devoted largely to the advantages that would result from a modest increase in the membership of the Association. A thousand members, it was stated, would make possible more of such activities as participation in regional meetings and the conducting by mail of referenda concerning policies and projects. Members were urged to make a personal effort to increase the size of the Asssociation by interesting their colleagues. The Secretary insisted that three hundred new members would not destroy the informality and wieldiness of the organization.

The 112 diners at the banquet that concluded Sunday's formal activities heard with enthusiasm a condemnation by President-elect Lowry of such administrators as those who assert that promotion in their institutions is based on how well a teacher is known off the campus rather than on, and on the total pages of their publications a year rather than on their teaching. Especially loud applause greeted his statement that English teachers needed more time to read.

Because of the enforced absence of retiring President Norman Foerster, the latter's scheduled address was read for him by President Lowry, who remarked that once he had had to read a speech with which he did not agree and had felt rather silly, but that he agreed completely with what he was about to read. The entire address appears in this issue of THE NEWS LETTER.

The dinner meeting concluded with recitations of a number of the poems of James Whitcomb Riley, Hoosier poet, by a Hoosier professor, George E. Davis, of Purdue University. Delivered in a very conversational manner, the dialect poems charmed the audience with their homely style and philosophy for nearly an hour.

Monday morning's sessions began with a paper on "Literature in a Democracy," presented by Clarence R. Decker, president of Kansas City University. Asserting that the failure of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—the greatest of all centuries in industrial and mechanical achievements—to reconcile material power and moral responsibility has wrought economic, social, and political chaos and now threatens the collapse of civilization, Dr. Decker charged that education, infected with mammon-worship and aping the methods of an irresponsible Industrial Revolution, has failed to contribute its strength and its faith to the struggle between culture and anarchy.

Leveling his criticism most pointedly against administrators and professors of education (with a big E), he gave the audience some examples of textbook instructions to prospective teachers. These paid no attention to cultural aims and a larger intellectual life, but to superficialities. Laughter resulted especially from his reading of a strong textbook appeal to the teacher to avoid the effect of sedentary life by adding bran to the diet.

"The basic task of our profession," Dr. Decker said, "is to prepare young men and women for inquisitive rather than acquisitive responsibilities. Languages and literatures are the great carriers of the culture of civilization. They, perhaps more than other subjects, transmit the values so sorely needed in the modern world. As teachers of English we must restore the study of literature in all its aspects—as history, as philosophy, as a dynamic creative force—to the forefront of education."

The final session of the Indianapolis meeting heard a paper on "The Crisis and Literature for Freshmen," by William Blackburn, of Duke University, which examined the books of readings now used in Freshman English and their effect on the young. These omnibuses, prepared especially to promote a scientific, realistic, and objective attitude, are likely, it was demonstrated by numerous quotations, to produce mere callousness rather than a desire to affirm the truth and value of human aspirations.

"Since courses in the social sciences," Dr. Blackburn said, "are concerned either directly or indirectly with orienting students in the problems of the modern world, one may question whether Freshman English should devote itself also to this exploration. On the contrary, our province should be the world of great books. In that world our students would be enabled to take effective measurement both of themselves and of the world in which they live."

Discussions of the papers presented by Drs. Decker and Blackburn, unfortunately limited somewhat by lack of time, were led respectively by Bertha M. Stearns, of Wellesley College, and R. Balfour Daniels, of the University of Houston. Miss Stearns suggested that perhaps some of the criticism of current practices sets up straw men to be demolished and urged English teachers not to forget that they are teachers of literature and clear expression. Dr. Daniels proposed that the classics in translation, even though some departments might object that English teachers are not the proper custodians of Greek and Latin literature, could be used advantageously in "English A."

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Literature and The Humanities

Some of the points of "Literature and the Other Arts" (November issue of THE NEWS LETTER) have already been put to work in humanities courses. In these, problems like the relation between literature and painting or the effect of music upon poetry are taken up rather broadly. Doubtless no English teacher would think this fact merely a happy coincidence, but not many English teachers seem to know that in humanities programs literature has commonly been the center around which other arts have clustered. Instructors in English and the humanities are like cousins who have been brought up together and now live in different parts of the city. There is a connection between them which needs to be better understood—first historically, and second structurally.

Historically, Patria Beesley, in *The Revival of the Humanities in American Education,* finds that within the new humanities themselves the strength of literary studies, as a main guiding influence, has been as great as that of several other forces combined. Even in the founding of these departments, this has been true. There was a period when the so-called less "useful" subjects were subordinated to the sciences and social studies. In the years that followed, the reaction in favor of literature was one of the main impulses toward forming the new humanities. The general re-acceptance of the one prompted the development of the other. In the process of restoring old masterpieces, beauties are sometimes uncovered which no one has noticed before.

Since those years of begining, English teachers have been most outspoken about the need for wider study of the humanities; naturally they have defined them and set them up so that the study of literature has to be the central work. One writer on the humanities shows her real sympathies by ending her article with a demand for new techniques in the teaching of literature. The chairman of the division of the humanities at another school is more forthright, and begins a speech on the topic with the vow that he would rather teach English literature (in a Southern university) than do anything else in the world. Even a writer who comes to the problem from a wide educational background concludes that English must be the core of the department, and that the most effective procedure in drafting a general humanities course would be to begin with a "unit in world literature." From English literature, in fact, the growth has been through departments of comparative literature and general literature, and courses in world literature, to general humanities. Taking on the arts and philosophy was an easy step—at least in theory.

At first the leadership of one subject-matter department in undertaking and keeping up a whole administrative organization might seem at odds with the spirit of the humanities. If we try to find out what that "spirit" is, however, we may not think so. Is it more than a common name? First, we may note that the statements of offerings, while they are not exactly alike, do not conflict with each other. For one administrator, the humanities include literature, languages, the fine arts, and the history of philosophy and of human institutions. At Chicago, the Division of the Humanities comprises all the language and literature departments as well as the departments of art, philosophy, comparative religion, and part of history. The scope of the humanities in another school is simply art, literature, history, and philosophy. Secondly, the distinguishing mark of the humanities is usually understood to be insistence upon values as the important results of experience. And other characteristics have been acknowledged: feeling for unity, understanding of the historical process, and æsthetic appreciation. The surface currents may vary, yet at bottom there is fairly clear agreement on values.

Now when we realize that all the humanities aim at the expression of values—intellectual, moral, spiritual, and æsthetic—the leaning toward literature is more intelligible; for literature, of all the arts, can be most explicit on those values. Here is a final reason for the dominion it has exercised: literature is best separated from the rest of written matter by the same values that the humanities seek to inculcate, and it speaks most plainly of them. Other reasons could be added, of lesser importance. For one, the accessibility of literature, as compared with the other arts, is unequalled—it's so easy to get to! You can't underline a performance of *Parsifal,* or stop a dance by the Russian Ballet to analyze configurations. As another asset we might point to the inclusiveness of literature: Homer wrote much of our ancient history, and Burke intended his speech for the ears of M.P.'s, not for the minds of American high school students. Literature adds all the advantages of the arts to some of those of the social studies, and even of the sciences. Its leadership in the humanities might almost be called inevitable.

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Literary Scholarship

Shakespeare's Audience, by Alfred Harbage, Columbia University Press, 1941

Although this book contains much arithmetic and even algebra (used in computing the size of Elizabethan theater crowds) and deals with Shakespeare's audience rather than with the plays themselves, no one will class it with the type of scholarship that is devoted to dreary statistics and matters two or three removes from the literary work with which it presumably is concerned.

Properly speaking, it is a book on the theater, but it also throws plenty of light upon the plays themselves, especially as the audience, as every audience must, contributed to their composition. And if there is any worth in democracy and the dignity of the common man, to which many CEA members have been paying their respects, the book is timely.

For one thing, it convincingly confutes the notion that Elizabethan audiences were composed principally of cutpurses, stinkards, and what else—rabble that could not possibly appreciate the pearls cast before them. For another, it demolishes the belief that there were two levels in the audience and that Shakespeare's plays were written so as to contain two levels of appreciation. This, perhaps, will be hard for us to give up, for modern intellectual snobbery cannot conceive of the Elizabethan workman's being nearly so acute as we.

Yet this is the author's principal conclusion. In fact Dr. Harbage maintains that to that audience, a large and receptive assemblage of men and women of all ages and classes, we owe Shakespeare's universality. "We are amused," he writes, in a fine concluding chapter, "at the ease with which his work escapes the sectarian and the partisan. It now resists Marxian exegesis as readily as in the past it has resisted appropriation by the elite. It belongs to everyone because it was created for everyone."

Behind that conclusion lies a convincing marshaling of evidence concerning the kind of people who met daily at the Globe, the Rose, the Bull. They were not the rowdies, criminals, and dull laborers, with a slight infusion of elegant noblemen and masked ladies, pictured for us either by the blue-nosed moralists or uneasy aldermen, but a group composed mostly of skilled artisans and, in a lesser number, their wives—sober people with discrimination and perceptions sharpened by regular attendance at the theater, where they were cautiously spending money that was hard to come by for the single pleasure that the Elizabethan could obtain at a cost that compares favorably with what we pay for entertainment today.

After reviewing all the evidence, one concludes that the indictment of the Elizabethan playgoer has resulted from hearing only the prosecution's witnesses. It is true that pockets were picked and that more serious felonies occurred in Shakespeare's theater, but previous scholars have overlooked the fact that they also occurred at St. Paul's, Westminster, and the Exchange, seats of religion, the law, and commerce; and, as Dr. Harbage amusingly remarks, "Pickpockets and prostitutes in an audience do not mean an audience of pickpockets and prostitutes—there is a law of diminishing returns."

C. D.

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